

THE FRONTIER GUARDIAN.

BY ORSON HYDE.

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The Frontier Guardian.

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ORSON HYDE, EDITOR AND PROPRIETOR.

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Each additional insertion, " " 50
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THE MORMONS.

A Discourse delivered before the Historical Society of Pennsylvania:

March 26, 1850.

BY THOMAS L. KANE.

[Continued.]

Beside the common duty of guiding and assisting these unfortunates, the companies in the van united in providing the highway for the entire body of emigrants. The Mormons have laid out for themselves a road through the Indian Territory, over four hundred leagues in length, with substantial, well built bridges, fit for the passage of heavy artillery, over all the streams, except a few great rivers where they have established permanent ferries. The nearest unfinished bridge to the Papillon Camp, was that of the Corne a Cer, or Elk-horn, a tributary of the Platte, distant may be a couple of hours' march. Here, in what seemed to be an incredibly short space of time, there rose the seven great piers and abutments of a bridge, such as might challenge honors for the entire public spirited population of lower Virginia. The party detailed to the task worked in the broiling sun, in water beyond depth, and up to their necks, as if engaged in the perpetration of some pointed and delightful practical joke. The chief sport lay in floating along with the logs, cut from the overhanging timber up the stream, guiding them till they reached their destination, and then plunging them under water in the precise spot where they were to be secured. This the laughing engineers would execute with the agility of happy diving ducks.

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ming in among their battling hoofs, display seats of address and hardihood, that would have made Franco's or the Madrid bull-vibrant with braves of applause. But in the hours after hours that I have watched this sport at the ferry side, I never heard an oath or the language of quarrel, or knew it provoke the least sign of ill feeling.

After the sorrowful word was given out to halt, and make preparations for winter, a chief labor became the making hay; and with every day dawn brigades of mowers would take up the march to their positions in chosen meadows—a prettier sight than a charge of cavalry—as they laid their swarthy, whole companies of scythes abreast. Before this time the manliest, as well as most general daily labor, was the herding of the cattle; the only wealth of the Mormons, and more and more cherished by them, with the increasing pastoral character of their lives.

A camp could not be pitched in any spot without soon exhausting the freshness of the pasture around it; and it became an ever recurring task to guide the cattle, in unbroken droves, to the nearest places where it was still fresh and fattening. Sometimes it was necessary to go further, to distant ranges which were known as feeding grounds of the Buffalo. About these there were sure to prowling parties of thieving Indians; and each drove therefore had its escort of mounted men and boys, who learned self-reliance and heroism while on night guard alone, among the silent hills. But generally the cattle were driven from the camp at the dawn of morning, and brought back thousands together in the evening, to be picketed in the great corral or enclosure, where beavers, bulls, cows, and oxen, with the horses, mules, hogs, calves, sheep and human beings, could all look together upon the red watch fires, with the feeling of security, when aroused by the Indian stampede, or the howlings of the prairie wolves at moon-rise.

When they set about building their winter houses, too, the Mormons went into quite considerable timbering operations, and performed desperate feats of carpentry. They did not come, ornamental gentlemen or raw apprentices, to extemporize new versions of Robinson Crusoe. It was a comfort to notice the readiness with which they turned their hands to wood craft; some of them, though I believe they had generally been bred carpenters, wheelwrights, or more particularly boat builders, quite outdoing the most notable voyagers in the use of the axe. One of these would fell a tree, strip off its bark, cut and split up the trunk in piles of plank, scantling, or shingles; make posts, and pins, and pales—everything wanted almost, of the branches; and treat his toil from first to last with more sportive flourish than a school-boy whittling his shingle.

Inside the camp, the chief labors were assigned to the women. From the moment, when after the halt, the lines had been laid, the spring wells dug out, and the ovens and fire-places built, though the men assumed to set the guards and enforce the regulations of Police, the Empire of the Tented Town was with the better sex. They were the chief comforters of the severest sufferers, the kind nurses who gave them in their sickness, those dear attentions, with which pauperism is hardly poor, and which the greatest wealth often fails to buy. And they were a nation of wonderful managers. They could hardly be called house wives in etymological strictness, but it was plain they had once been such, and most distinguished ones. Their art availed them in their changed affairs. With almost their entire culinary material limited to the milk of their cows, some store of meal or flour, and a very few condiments, they brought their thousand and one receipts into play with a success that outdid for their families, the miracle of the Hebrew widow's cruise. They learned to make butter on a march, by the dashing of the wagon, and so nicely to calculate the working of barm in the jolting heats, that as soon after the halt as an oven could be dug in the hill side and heated, their well kneaded loaf was ready for baking, and produced good leavened bread for supper. I have no doubt the appetizing zest, their humble lore succeeded in imparting to diet which was both simple and meagre, availed materially for the health as well as the comfort of the people.

But the first duty of the Mormon women was, through all change of place and fortune, to keep alive the altar fire of home. Whatever their manifold labors for the day, it was their effort to complete them against the sacred hour of evening fall. For by that time all the out-workers, scouts, ferrymen or bridgemen, road-makers, herdsmen or haymakers, had finished their tasks and come in to their rest. And before the last smoke of the supper fire curled up reddening in the glow of sunset, a hundred chimes of cattle bells announced their looked-for approach across the open hills, and the women went out to meet them at the camp gates, and with their children in their laps sat by them at the cherished family meal, and talked over the events of the well-spent day.

But every day closed as every day began, with an invocation of the Divine favor; without which, indeed, no Mormon seemed to dare to lay down to rest. With the first shining of the stars, laughter and loud talking hushed, the neighbor went his way, you heard the last hymn sung, and then the thousand-voiced murmur of prayer was heard like babbling water falling down the hills.

There was no austerity, however, about the religion of Mormonism. Their fasting and penance, it is no just to say, was altogether voluntary. They made no merit of that. They kept the Sabbath with considerable strictness; they were too close copyists of the wanderers of Israel in other respects not to have learned, like them, the

value of this most admirable of the Egyptian institutions. But the rest of the week, their religion was independent of ritual observance. They had the sort of strong stomach faith that is still found embalmed in sheltered spots of Catholic Italy and Spain, with the spirit of the believing or Dark Ages. It was altogether too strongly felt, to be dependent on intellectual ingenuity or careful caution of the ridiculous. It mixed itself up fearlessly with the common transactions of their every-day life, and only to give them liveliness and color.

If any passages of life bear better than others a double interpretation, they are the adventures of travel, and of the field. What old persons call discomforts and discouraging mishaps, are the very elements to the young and sanguine, of what they are willing to term fun. The Mormons took the young and frolic of their trials, and often turn right sharp suffering into right round laughter against themselves. I certainly heard more jests and Joe Millers while in this Papillon Camp, than I am likely to hear in all the remainder of my days.

This, too, was at a time of serious affliction. Beside the ordinary suffering from insufficient food and shelter, distressing and mortal sickness, exacerbated, if not originated by these causes, was generally prevalent.

In the camp nearest us on the West, which was that of the bridging party near the Corne, the number of its inhabitants being small enough to invite computation, I found, as early as the 31st of July, that 37 per cent. of its inhabitants were down with the Fever and a sort of strange scorbutic disease, frequently fatal, which they named the Black Canker. The camps to the East of us, which were all on the eastern side of the Missouri, were yet worse fated.

The climate of the entire upper "Misery Bottom," as they term it, is, during a considerable part of Summer and Autumn singularly pestiferous. Its rich soil, which is to a depth far beyond the reach of the plough as fat as the earth of a kitchen garden, or compost-heap, is annually the forced of a vegetation as rank as that of the Tropics. To render its fatal fertility the greater, it is everywhere freely watered by springs and creeks and larger streams, that flow into it from both sides. In the season of drought, when the Sun enters Virgo, these dry down

